

## **Testimony**

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SOLDIERS BEFORE THE HOUSE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
CRIME, TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY

### **Hearing on the Child Soldier Accountability Act April 8, 2008**

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee for allowing me testify before you today on behalf of many of the children who are being brutally forced to become soldiers and killers. Your concern on the child soldiers is very vital for the children who have suffered and still suffering. On night of October 9, 1996 the lord's resistance army, rebels to the government of Uganda, dashed into my dormitory. And Some rebels were younger than me, then 15 years old. Within an hour the rebels tied up girls in my dormitory, and forced 139 girls into the cold night. It was pricking cold. It felt unreal. No stars shone. Dawn was far off. No moon lit our way. Only dark clouds announcing our fate. Our silent fear had come true; nothing could prepare me for it. For 20 years, war has been no stranger amongst us. Our capture could have happened on any other day. But this particular day of celebration and singing in my country? Such irony. For October 9, 1996, was our independence. That night, led like slaves, we were taken

to the life of torment. We left our independence behind. We moved the whole night. Sister Rachelle, the deputy headmistress who had hidden behind the banana plantation, tracked our footprints and caught up with us. Sister Rachelle, swollen with grief, walked by our side for the whole day pleading with the commander for our release. 109 were released and the 30 of us were kept behind and some of us were never to come back to our homeland, and feel the warmth our parents' love again, never to see the rise and setting of the sun again. We were taught to dismantle clean and assembled the gun. We taught to kill abduct and loot people property. Many of the kids who could not walk were killed and those who tried to escape were brutally killed in front of the others. Five of my friends were killed and two are still missing.

I have seen heads smashed. I have seen people beaten until their sockets swallow their eyes. I have seen children turned into monsters against their will. I have survived being buried alive.

Dear Mr. Chairman, the recruitment and forcible abduction of children into the army continues, because their voices are never heard, we have failed to see their tears. The day I was abducted, the world stood still and that is what every child forced to become child a soldiers encounters, it is beyond fear Mr. Chairman.

I am not here to evoke emotions without action, but to plead with you Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee to make child soldier accountability act became law. The perpetrators of child soldiering crime

must be held accountable. They should be brought to justice anywhere in the world. It pains my heart when the perpetrators are given safe havens here in the United States and other parts of the world or given amnesty as in the case in a country where some of the perpetrators have been given Amnesty, they live like kings yet the victims continue to suffer injustices.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1989 the United Nations approved the Convention on the rights of the child and in article 35 states; the right to protection from being abducted, sold, or trafficked. 36 states; the right to protection from all other forms of exploitation and 38 states; the right, if below 15 years of age not to be recruited into the armed forces nor engage in direct hostilities. Mr. Chairman this has not been obeyed by some countries that still abduct, recruit and exploit children, because they do not face any consequences of their action. By making the Child soldier accountability act 2007 become law, it would send a strong message to those involved now and those planning in the future to recruit and abduct children below 15 years of age into armed forces.

Mr. Chairman and the members of the Subcommittee, I believe that as you decide on this piece of legislation whether to adopt it or not, you would be thinking of your own family, your children, if they were the ones being forced to become soldiers what would you do, what would you want people to do for you and your family.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

